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ABSTRACT

Studies focusing on televised presidential primary debates include four prespectives. From a historical perspective, televised presidential primary debates have increased slowly from 1956 through 1980. With the 1975 Federal Communications Commission ruling that independently sponsored campaign debates were news events exempt from "equal time" requirements, the number of presidential primary debates have increased greatly. From the pragmatic perspective of a presidential candidate, primary debates offer widespread and usually free public exposure. News media have become increasingly important to a primary campaign, because commercial rates are prohibitive and voters suspect candidates who refuse to debate. From the public affairs perspective, various sponsors of televised debates believe that debates serve the public interest, and considerable evidence supports this. A benefit of primary debates is that they allow experimentation with a variety of debate formats and procedures that may improve the quality of general election debates. From a television perspective, presidential debates are defined by the television medium. The real issue is whether televised primary debates help or hinder the intellectual quality of campaign discourse and the rationality of political decision-making by American voters. To some measure, this will depend upon the ability of sponsors to devise appropriate formats for primary campaign forums. (HTH)

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THE PAST AND FUTURE OF PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY DEBATES

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Dorothy Ridings, president of the League of Women Voters, recently remarked: "No question about it, this is the year of the televised political debate."[1] With the presidential election still seven months away, presidential candidates have already participated in more televised debates in 1984 than occurred in the entire 1980 presidential campaign. By election day, November 6, 1984, it is possible that more presidential debates will have been broadcast in 1984 than were televised in all previous presidential campaigns.

The purpose of this paper is to assess a relatively recent phenomenon in campaign debating: the presidential primary debate. Although considerable scholarly attention has been devoted to televised political campaign debates, very little research has been done on presidential primary debates. For example, of over 200 published and unpublished studies on campaign debates between 1960 and 1984, only eleven focus on televised presidential primary debates.[2] Our survey of these debates includes four phases:

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1) An historical perspective: The evolution of presidential primary debates since their inception in the Florida Democratic primary campaign on 1956.

2) A pragmatic political perspective: The political benefits and liabilities of presidential primary debates.

3) A public affairs perspective: How primary debates serve the interests of an informed electorate.

4) A television perspectives: The considerable difficulties posed by the need to create a TV format that allows interesting and coherent debate among three or more candidates from the same political party.

The Historical Perspective

Televised presidential debates have had a fitful history in the United States. They were instituted at the general election level in 1960 only because of a special act of Congress which exempted them from the "equal time rule" in broadcasting law. When Congress failed to extend the exemption, presidential campaign debates largely disappeared. In 1975 the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) ruled that independently sponsored campaign debates were news events exempt from the "equal time clause" (Section 315 of the Communications Act). This made it possible for broadcasters to televise such political debates among the major candidates without being obliged to include minor candidates--nor give them equal time in a later program.[3]

The 1980 campaign marked the institutionalization of presidential debates as the FCC continued its 1975 ruling. Debates secured a foothold in American politics not because of an FCC mandate, nor because of requirements tied to public financing of campaigns, but simply because the FCC ruling made such debates

possible and public opinion made it unwise for candidates to refuse to debate.

Eight years after the 1975 ruling in the "Aspen Institute Case," another FCC ruling has fundamentally altered the political landscape. Like the 1975 decision, the 1983 FCC decision did not mandate debates, but made them easier to sponsor and broadcast. On November 8, 1983, the FCC ruled (over the objections of the League of Women Voters) that television stations may sponsor debates and invite candidates of their choosing without being obliged to provide equal time to the minor candidates. In March 1984 the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia unanimously upheld the FCC interpretation of the equal time law.[4] The initial result of the new FCC ruling has been an explosion in the number of presidential primary debates in the 1984 Democratic primary campaign.

A brief historical survey illustrates the significance of FCC decisions. The first televised presidential primary debate (in fact, the first presidential TV debate of any kind) pitted Adlai Stevenson against Estes Kefauver during the 1956 Florida primary. That nationally broadcast forum was the only televised debate of the 1956 campaign.[5] Four years later John F. Kennedy won the Democratic presidential primary in West Virginia, in part, because of his performance in a TV debate against Hubert H. Humphrey. Of course, Kennedy and Nixon participated in TV debates during the general election, but the West Virginia debate was the only televised forum during the 1960 primary campaign.[6] No TV debates occurred during the 1964 presidential primary and

general election campaigns. In 1968 only one TV debate was held: a joint appearance of Robert F. Kennedy and Eugene McCarthy during the California primary. Kennedy had refused to debate through most of the campaign, but agreed to appear with McCarthy after Kennedy lost the Oregon primary.[7]

The tendency of the "equal time rule" to discourage presidential primary debates is most clearly illustrated by the difficulties that the television networks encountered in their attempts to broadcast debates between Hubert Humphrey and George McGovern during the 1972 California primary. The two candidates had agreed to debate on expanded versions of news interview shows on the three networks: "Face the Nation" (CBS) on May 28; "Meet the Press" (NBC) on May 30; and "Issues and Answers" (ABC) on June 4.

The first two nationally broadcast debates occurred as scheduled despite pending legal action by minor candidates, but prior to the final debate, the U.S. Court of Appeals in Washington, D.C. ruled in favor of one of the minor candidates, Rep. Shirley Chisholm of New York. The Court required that she be included in the third debate (ABC's "Issues and Answers"), that ABC also give her half-an-hour of prime time before the California election, and that both CBS and NBC give her equal time prior to the California election as compensation for excluding her from their debates. To avoid further litigation, ABC expanded the debate to include not only Chisholm, but also two other minor candidates: Sam Yorty, Mayor of Los Angeles, and George Wallace, who was not even on the ballot in the California Democratic presidential primary.[8]

While the exclusion of candidates from primary election debates posed serious ethical and public policy questions, television stations and networks were understandably reluctant to continue sponsoring debates when the possibilities of litigation and mandated "free" prime time lurked behind every forum. The experience of the 1972 California primary debates may have encouraged the FCC to exempt independently sponsored debates from the equal time rule. In any event, the "Aspen Institute Case" brought forth the new exemptions prior to the 1976 debates.

Although the debates between Jimmy Carter and Gerald Ford received the most attention in 1976, the League of Women Voters had also sponsored four televised "forums" during the 1976 Democratic primary campaign. Generally regarded as unsatisfactory political television, the forums did not seek to stimulate the direct clash of debates and were organized around four different "issue" themes: the economy, social security and welfare, urban policy, and foreign affairs. Instead of using experienced journalists, these forums featured "subject area experts" who sometimes used the televised programs to explain their own theories, rather than to question the candidates. Indeed, in some forums the panelists nearly outnumbered the candidates.[9]

In 1980 the League of Women Voters and other sponsors abandoned the "expert panelists" and sponsored forums which increasingly functioned as debates between the various candidates for the Republican presidential nomination. A total of five Republican primary debates were televised in 1980, with the League sponsoring three debates, the Des Moines Register sponsoring

another, and the University of South Carolina and the Columbia, South Carolina, Columbian Record co-sponsoring yet another.[10]

Televised presidential primary debates have grown slowly from 1956 through 1980: one in 1956, one in 1960, none in 1964, one in 1968, three in 1972, four in 1976, and five in 1980. With the new FCC ruling, however, televised presidential primary debates have grown so rapidly in 1984 that it is difficult to be confident about just how many have been broadcast.

By our count, the candidates for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1984 have already participated in eleven televised debates and at least four more debates are scheduled--including one during this conference (April 5th) in Pittsburgh sponsored by the League of Women Voters. These forums have been telecast nationally, regionally, and locally on the full range of broadcast and cable video: a commerical network TV, the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), and cable outlets such as "C-SPAN." It is interesting to note that so far only CBS has taken full advantage of the new FCC ruling which allows television stations and networks to sponsor their own debates. On March 28th, just eight days ago, CBS sponsored and broadcast a debate among Walter Mondale, Gary Hart, and Jesse Jackson which took place before a live audience of about 500 people in the Columbia University Library in New York City. This debate was the first network sponsored presidential debate since the Kennedy-Nixon debates of 1960, but certainly not the last. NBC has announced that it will sponsor a Democratic primary debate "probably" in April, and ABC plans to host a similar forum at Ohio State University in early May. (A New York City affiliate of NBC [WNBC-TV] sponsored a

second New York debate four days after the CBS network debate, but it was only broadcast locally.)

While the networks have been slow to enter the field, the FCC decision seems to have encouraged debate sponsors other than the League of Women Voters. It also appears to have encouraged a wide range of television outlets to broadcast presidential primary debates. In 1980 the primary debate sponsors were limited to the League, two newspapers, and a university. In 1984, almost everyone is sponsoring a TV debate: the Massachusetts Citizens Coalition for Arms Control, the U.S. House of Representatives Democratic Caucus, the Iowa Farm Unity Forum, the Chicago Bar Association, the Boston Globe, the Institute of Politics and the John F. Kennedy School of Government (both affiliated with Harvard University), the Des Moines Register, CBS, WNBC-TV (New York City), and the League of Women Voters. Untelevised forums and debates are being staged by an even more diverse group of sponsors.

A Political Perspective

From the pragmatic perspective of a presidential candidate, primary debates offer an opportunity for widespread (and usually free) public exposure. Spending restrictions that come with federal funding of presidential campaigns make such "free" TV time all the more attractive. During the 1980 Democratic primary campaign, Richard G. Sterns, director of delegate selection for the Edward Kennedy campaign, remarked that the news media have become increasingly important to a primary campaign because

candidates cannot purchase a significant amount of TV time at the "prevailing commercial rates with the amount of money we're allowed to raise and spend."[11]

What is more, voters have begun to punish candidates who refuse to debate. This tendency goes back to some of the earlier TV debates in presidential primaries. In 1968 Robert Kennedy lost the Oregon primary to Eugene McCarthy after refusing to debate. He changed his posture in the subsequent California primary and won the election. In 1980 Reagan declined to participate in the first Republican presidential debate (prior to the Iowa caucuses) and promptly lost the constes in Iowa. Reagan's debate advisor, Myles Martel has noted that for candidates other than incumbent presidents, "no matter how well-known, how well-financed, or how favored they are, the experience of Ronald Reagan in the 1980 Iowa primary should serve as a warning that ducking primary debates can be dangerous."[12] The numerous TV debates in 1984 have rarely failed to draw every remaining Democratic presidential candidate.

Presidents, of course, can generate their own free publicity without participating in primary debates, and incumbent presidents who are challenged in primaries seem to be able to obtain re-nomination without participating in debates. In fact, an incumbent president has never agreed to a televised primary debate.

Participation in primary debates is not an unmixed blessing for a presidential candidate. Bitter debates can delay or prevent party unity after the nomination and can present all the candidates

in an unfavorable light compared to a non-debating president. Tom Wicker of the New York Times recently observed that the the Democratic debates in March 1984 may already have had that effect. The "vitriolic exchanges of the [first] New York debate," Wicker noted, have left "real political blood on the floor." After losing that primary (according to an Associated Press story), "Hart acidly appraised his defeat by saying that Mondale 'got me down to his level' in the campaign debate. 'He won't do that again,' he vowed."[13]

The opposing party is hardly unaware of the possible negative effects of bitter debates. In 1984 the Republican National Committee (RNC) retained the service of "Media-Scan of American, Inc." for $15,000 a year. This Little Rock, Arkansas, firm is keeping track of what Democratic presidential candidates are saying. How will the Republicans use these quotations? An "anonymous" Republican source explained that the RNC hopes to use the material to "simmer the Democrats in debates" during the 1984 general presidential election.[14]

On an only slightly more subtle level, primary debates can help to create the dramatic context of the entire campaign. More to the point, debates give candidates opportunities to act out an attractive role in the political drama. Reagan's role in the Republican primary debates of 1980 (once he got past Iowa) created the impression that he was a candid, good-humored, and fair person promoting free discussion. He seemed to sponsor the other candidates in the Nashua debate, rose above the fray in the tumultuous Illinois debate, and agreed to debate George Bush before the Texas primary election despite Reagan's clear lead in

delegates to the Republican National Convention. As Professor Blankenship has demonstrated in her presentation, Reagan managed to use his television presence to encompass the primary debates and thereby the Republican nomination.[15] Dr. Harral makes a similar point about Reagan's self-appointed role in the political ritual of the New Hampshire debates.[16]

On the other hand, Carter cast himself in the role of the recalcitrant debater throughout the 1980 presidential primary elections--a role which came back to haunt him once the public wearied of the Iranian hostage crisis. When the issue of John Anderson's participation in the debate's arose during the 1980 general election, it was Carter who appeared to be again seeking unfair advantage, while Reagan continued his posture as the champion of open debate.[17]

Thus far in the 1984 Democratic presidential primary debates, Jesse Jackson seems to be the most artful actor in political theatre. As the Democratic race has narrowed to Mondale, Hart and Jackson, he has assumed the role of peacemaker between the contentious front-runners. In the earlier debates George McGovern had filled this role, with Jackson having fewer opportunities to intercede in behalf of reason. It was Jackson, however, who called Phil Donahue to task in the first New Hampshire debate when the talk-show host glibly jumped to a new topic when the candidates wanted to pursue the previous subject further.

It was Jackson who intruded between Hart and Mondale in the first New York debate (March 28th), calling his opponents to task

for their heated but unenlightening remarks. At one point Jackson leaned forward, arms streched before him, placing himself between his bickering opponents. When Hart and Mondale fired back and forth concerning "who was first" to suppport a nuclear "freeze," Jackson interjected: "He may have been slow on that, you were slow to come out on Vietnam, and slow on the invasion in Grenada, ... The issue is not who has a given weakness at a given time, the issue is how can we deal with the Soviet Union."

Again as his two opponents exchanged charges of misrepresentation on foreign policy positions, Jackson broke in both physically and verbally: "Please, please stop this. Because tomorrow the issue will be this rat-a-tat-tat without dealing with direction [of foreign policy]." Turning to the debate moderator, Dan Rather, Jackson continued: "The reason why they are having this kind of kinship struggle is that there is such similarity in policies, its a matter of both going in the same direction, just a little slower. That's all it is."[18] With that sort of role in the drama of presidential primary debates, one has to wonder whether Jesse Jackson may not be nominated as the Democrats' vice presidential candidate.

The Public Affairs Perspective

The various sponsors of televised debates do not hold them so that candidates may posture in attractive roles. They believe that debates serve the public interest, and considerable evidence is available that the sponsors are correct. Mass communication

scholar Steven H. Chaffee has summarized an impressive number of studies that indicate viewers acquire political information from televised presidential debates.[19] Primary debates have the additional virtue of occurring early in the campaign when the voters know less about candidates and their positions, and, hence, when the most political learning is likely to occur.[20]

Two studies of the 1980 primary debates offer encouraging evidence that those early forums stimulated political learning on the part of viewers. Based upon fifty responses in a two-wave telephone and mail survey before and after the 1980 Iowa Republican debate (January 5, 1980), a group of researchers at the University of Iowa reached the tentative conclusion that viewers of the debate had changed the way in which they thought about the Republican candidates. This was more than merely learning a candidate's position on an issue; the debate shaped the criteria on which viewers assessed candidates, and increased the viewers' ability to contrast the political orientations of the candidates.[21]

The other study tested political learning from the second primary debate of the 1980 campaign--the New Hampshire debate in Manchester on February 20th. Based upon data gathered from over 200 subjects who watched the debate on television in Oregon, a group of researchers at the University of Oregon concluded that watching a primary debate not only increased voters' knowledge of the campaign, but also stimulated interest in the campaign. The study, which carefully controlled the factor of "self-selected" viewers, supports the fondest hopes of debate sponsors such as the League of Women Voters: voters who watched the TV debate

sought out more information on the campaign during the next month than those who did not see the debate.[22]

A less obvious benefit of primary debates is that they allow for experimentation with a variety of debate formats and procedures which may eventually improve the quality of presidential debates during the general election campaign. This process may have already begun. Surely one of the most successful changes in debate formats during the 1980 primaries was the removal of the panel of reporters. Panelists of various sorts had participated in the 1976 primary forums, as well as in the 1976 Carter-Ford debates. They continued to be a fixture in the early 1980 primary debates in Iowa, New Hampshire, and South Carolina. Apparently unhappy with so much intrusion from non-candidates and perhaps hoping for a more direct debate among the Republican candidates, the League of Women Voters sponsored the 1980 Illinois debate with only a moderator and the candidates. The result was perhaps the best debate of the primary season. The League again used only a moderator in its final primary forum of 1980--the Texas debate between Ronald Reagan and George Bush. This feature of the debate format has continued in most of the 1984 Democratic primary TV debates.

The Television Perspective

Presidential debates are defined by the television medium. Both the debates and the most influential public analyses of the debates are televised and therefore are dramatic in form and character. Richard Salant, Vice Chairman of the Board at NBC,

has candidly remarked that "because of the format [of television], we go with attacks and counterattacks. And because we go with them, that usually means we get them."[23]

Televised debates--whether in primary or general elections--will always be part of the larger drama of the campaign. And that drama will be intensified by the nature of the television medium.[24] Richard Nixon, who has good reason to resent the impact of television on politics, has expressed misgivings about televised debates: "I doubt that they can ever serve a responsible role in defining the issues of a presidential campaign. Because of the nature of the medium, there will inevitably be a greater premium on showmanship than on statesmanship."[25] Following the 1980 election, Nixon was even more direct, dismissing television as "a show business medium." "More often than not," he continued, "what is emotionally appealing--and therefore dramatically captivating--is intellectually vacuous and substantively wrong. What makes good television often makes bad policy."[26]

Such critiques apply to all televised political campaigning, which is to say, all serious presidential campaign efforts. Short of banning politics from television, the real issue is whether televised primary debates help or hinder the intellectual quality of campaign discourse and the rationality of political decision-making by American voters. In some measure, this will depend upon the ability of debate sponsors to devise appropriate formats for presidential primary forums.[27]

As television networks, stations, and personalities assume a larger role in sponsoring debates, they seem to be groping for an

appropriate model. The first New Hampshire debate of 1984 received mixed reviews, in part, because of its incredible length of three hours. ABC's Ted Koppel teamed up with talk-show host Phil Donahue to produce what they know best--a talk show. The debate included dramatic posturing by John Glenn and Walter Mondale, each rising from his seat, pointing and shouting at the other. It followed the form of Donahue's talk-show, including some unexpected (and pointless) questions from the audience. Alan Cranston, for example, was asked to explain the brown tint that had returned to his rather limited and gray hair. Newspaper commentators described the debate as "total TV," as "political theatre," and as "the turning point at which television finally made over politics in its own image."[28]

It is instructive that none of the subsequent primary debate sponsors have imitated the Koppel and Donahue show. Perhaps it was the sight of presidential candidates raising their hands like school children, seeking Donahue's permission to speak. Perhaps it was the moderators' determined lack of preparation: both claimed not to have prepared any questions in advance.[29]

Curiously, a live audience somehow seems necessary for a televised debate, much as it is necessary in other TV programs which provide talk rather than action. Even though CBS could have broadcast its New York debate from a studio without any audience, it chose to fill the Columbia University Library with 500 guests--as if it were covering a debate under the old FCC rules which required a bona fide news event before the network was exempted from the equal time law. As with watching the "Johnny Carson Show," the television audience for the CBS debate was

aware of the live audience. But the candidates spoke to each other and to the moderator. Rather than addressing their live and TV audiences directly, they allowed their audiences to "overhear" ther

Perhaps most distressing is the ease with which both candidates and moderators slip into the vernacular of television. Barbara Walters seemed almost a parody of TV news interviewers as she posed long and involved hypothetical questions in the second New Hampshire debate (Feb. 23, 1984), which was sponsored by the League of Women Voters. "Those cute hypothetical questions," one newspaper columnist remarked, ". . . are meaninglessly theoretical because they don't test leadership under stress of actual crises."[30]

The candidates themselves have proven no less facile at uttering banalities short enough for impact on television. The League's debate in Atlanta on March 11, 1984 included the typical TV punch lines. Hart borrowed Reagan's line from 1980 to respond to attacks from Mondale: "There you go again, Fritz." Not to be out-scored, Mondale dismissed Hart's explanations of his "new ideas" by remarking: "When I hear your new ideas, I'm reminded of that ad--'Where's the beef?'"[31]

A week later in the Illinois TV debate of March 18th, Hart responded to Mondale's question, repeating it for the benefit of any viewers who might have missed the previous debate installment: "Vice President Mondale cleverly has picked up a slogan from a fast-food chain [implying a lack of substance in the Hart campaign]." After some verbal sparring with Mondale over whether

the former Vice President had actually read Hart's book in which he calls for a new national agenda, Hart produced a copy of the book, announcing: "Here's a copy for you. Here's the beef."[32] The slogan from a 30-second TV commercial by a hamburger franchise became to most memorable statement from the 1984 presidential primary debates. This, in itself, indicates how far such debates must progress before they will fulfill their potential.

Conclusion

In announcing the House Democratic Caucus' plans to sponsor presidential primary debates in 1984, Rep. Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.) praised the seven candidates who had agreed to debate, noting that "they want to be judged not by straw polls or meaningless gimmicks but on their vision for the future of our country and how they plan to make it a reality."[33] As some of the 1984 presidential debates have already demonstrated, TV debates can be staged as the very sort of gimmicks that the House Democratic Caucus hoped to avoid. On the other hand, some of the 1984 primary debates have served as useful models of public discussion. Fortunately, considerable research has indicated that even imperfect TV debate formats promote political learning and stimulate interest in political issues.

As television managers and personalities assume a larger role in sponsoring television debates under the new FCC ruling, they will need to devise formats which are both interesting and enlightening. If they cannot achieve both, then they ought to recall Jack Germond and Jules Witcover's assessment of the 1980

Iowa Republican primary debate: "So the debate wasn't exciting. The fact is that serious discussion of serious issues of public policy often isn't. But neither is going to the dentist. In this imperfect world, there are some things you have to put up with for your own good."[34]

NOTES

[1]Quoted in USA Today, 29 March 1984, p. 1D.

[2]The following studies have been completed on presidential primary campaign debating: Goodwin F. Berquist, Jr. "The Kennedy-Humphrey Debate," Today's Speech, Vol. 8, No. 3 (September 1960), pp. 2-3, and 31; Jane Blankenship and Marlene G. Fine, "Debating in a Midwestern Presidential Primary: The 1980 Illinois Debate," a paper presented to the Southern Speech Communication Association, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, April 4-7, 1984; Jane Blankenship, Marlene G. Fine, and Leslie K. Davis, "The 1980 Republican Primary Debates: The Transformation of Actor to Scene," Quarterly Journal of Speech, 69 (February 1983), 25-36; LaDonna McMurray Geddes, "315: Another Dimension of 'Equality'," a paper presented to the Western Speech Communication Association, November, 1975; Harriet Briscoe Harral, "Debating in a Northern Presidential Primary: New Hampshire in 1980 and 1984," a paper presented to the Southern Speech Communication Association, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, April 4-7, 1984; Susan A. Hellweg and Steven L. Phillips, "A Verbal and Visual Analysis of the 1980 Houston Republican Presidential Primary Debate," Southern Speech Communication Journal, 47 (Fall 1981), 23-28; James B. Lemert, William R. Elliott, Karl J. Nestvold, and Galen R. Rarick, "Effects of Viewing a Presidential Primary Debate: An Experiment," Communication Research, 10 (April 1983), 155-173; LaDonna Lyle McMurray, "The Equal Time Law and the Free Flow of Communication: A Critical Study of the Humphrey-McGovern Debates," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Southern California, 1975; Kurt Ritter and Susan A. Hellweg, "The Past and Future of Presidential Primary Debates," a paper presented to the Southern Speech Communication Association, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, April 4-7, 1984; Hermann G. Stelzner, "Humphrey and Kennedy Court West Virginia, May 3, 1960," Southern Speech Communication Journal, 37 (Fall 1971), 21-33; and William M. Strickland, "Debating in a Southern Presidential Primary: The 1980 South Carolina Debate," a paper presented to the Southern Speech Communication Association, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, April 4-7, 1984.

[3]The 1975 FCC ruling is commonly referred to as the "Aspen Institute Case." For helpful summaries of the development of the "equal time law" in broadcasting from its origin through the 1975 "Aspen Institute Case," see: Nicholas Zapple, "Historical Evolution of Section 315," in The Past and Future of Presidential Debates, ed. Austin Ranney (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1979), pp. 56-74; and Herbert A. Terry, and Sidney Kraus, "Legal and Political Aspects: Was Section 315 Circumvented?" in The Great Debates: Carter vs. Ford, 1976, ed. Sidney Kraus (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), pp. 41-53. Not everyone has been pleased with the 1975 FCC ruling. See, for example, Roscoe L. Barrow, "The Presidential Debates of 1976: Toward a Two Party Political System," University of Cincinnati Law Review, 46 (1977), 123-149.

[4]Both the FCC's decision and the court ruling supporting the FCC decision were widely reported in the American press. See, for example, the Houston Chronicle, 9 Nov. 1983, Sec. 1, p. 5, and 14 March 1984, Sec. 1, p. 26.

[5]See Judith S. Trent and Robert V. Friedenberg, Political Campaign Communication: Principles and Practices (New York: Praeger, 1983), p. 241; and Evron M. Kirkpatrick, "Presidential Candidate 'Debates': What Can We Learn from 1960?" in The Past and Future of Presidential Debates, pp. 5-6.

[6]See the articles by Stelzner and Berquist cited in note 2.

[7]Frederick Clarke Sanders, Jr., "The Rhetorical Strategies of Senator Robert Kennedy and Senator Eugene J. McCarthy in the 1968 Presidential Primaries," unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oregon, 1973, pp. 155, 166, 170, 183, 197-198.

[8]See the two studies by LaDonna McMurray Geddes cited in note 2.

[9]See Susan A. Hellweg, "Political Debate Formats: A State-of-the-Art Review," paper presented to the Political Campaign Debates Action Caucus, Speech Communication Association, Louisville, November 1982, pp. 6-7, and Table 1. The inadequacies of the panelists in the 1976 presidential primary forums is discussed in Austin Ranney, ed. The Past and Future of Presidential Debates, pp. 189-190.

[10]See Susan A. Hellweg and Steven L. Phillips, "Form and Substance: A Comparative Analysis of the 1980 Presidential Debate Formats, paper presented to the Conference on Culture and Communication, San Diego, February 1981. For transcripts of all five televised Republican presidential primary debates during 1980 (as well as four other televised and untelevised debates from that campaign), see Theodore Rueter, ed. Transcripts of the 1980 Presidential Debates (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms International ["Reprinted on Demand" Service], 1983).

[11]Quoted in the New York Times, 8 June 1980, p. E5.

[12]Myles Martel, Political Campaign Debates: Images, Strategies, and Tactics (New York: Longman, 1983), p. 53.

[13]Tom Wicker, "Mondale, Hart Barbs Help GOP," Houston Chronicle, 2 April 1984, Sec. 2, p. 6; Associated Press story published in Bryan/College Station [Texas] Eagle, 4 April 1984, p. 1A.

[14]"Searching for the Bad Quote," USA Today, 2 Nov. 1983.

[15]Blankenship and Fine, "Debating in a Midwestern Presidential Primary"; and Blankenship, Fine, and Davis, "The 1980 Republican Primary Debates" (note 2).

[16]Harral, "Debating in a Northern Presidential Primary" (see note 2).

[17]See Robert L. Scott, "You Cannot Not Debate: The Debate Over the 1980 Presidential Debates," Speaker and Gavel, 18 (1981), 28-33.

[18]Quotations are from a video-tape of the first New York debate, March 28, 1984, sponsored and broadcast nationally by CBS.

[19]See Steven H. Chaffee and Jack Dennis, "Presidential Debates: An Empirical Assessment," in The Past and Future of Presidential Debates, pp. 75-106; and Steven H. Chaffee, "Presidential Debates--Are They Helpful to Voters?" Communication Monographs, 45 (Nov. 1978), 330-346.

[20]In analyzing why subjects in one of her studies did not gain a great deal of new information after watching the 1976 debates, Doris A. Graber noted that the 1976 "debates came late in the campaign and contained comparatively little information that had not been widely available in the predebate period and repeatedly presented to voters. This was true of explicit and implicit information about the personalities and qualifications of the candidates, as well as about campaign issues." See Graber, "Problems in Measuring Audience Effects of the 1976 Debates" in The Presidential Debates: Media, Electoral, and Policy Perspectives, eds. George F. Bishop, Robert G. Meadow, and Marilyn Jackson-Beeck (New York: Praeger, 1978), p. 122. Also see Doris A. Graber and Young Yun Kim, "Why John Q. Public Did Not Learn Much from the 1976 Presidential Debates," in Communication Yearbook 2, ed. Brent D. Ruben (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1979), pp. 416-417.

[21]Billie Gaughan, J. Ann Selzer, and Deborah Peterson, "The Iowa Republican TV Debate and Public Opinion: The Influence of Media on Political Thinking," a paper presented to the American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR), Buck Hills Falls, Pennsylvania, May 28-31, 1981.

[22]Lemert, et al. (see note 2).

[23]Quoted in David Halberstam, "How Television Failed the American Voter," Parade, 11 Jan. 1981, p. 8.

[24]For broader discussions of the impact of broadcast media on political rhetoric, see Paul E. Corcoran, Political Language and Rhetoric (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979), esp. pp. 156-180; and Richard M. Merelman, "The Dramaturgy of Politics," in Drama in Life: The Uses of Communication in Society, eds. James E. Combs and Michael W. Mansfield (New York: Hastings House, 1976), pp. 285-301.

[25]Richard Nixon, RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1978), p. 221.

[26]Richard Nixon, "Needed: Clarity of Purpose," Time (Nov. 10, 1980), p. 35.

[27]Perhaps the most realistic advice on debate formats comes from individuals who have actually devised televised campaign debates. Two particularly helpful accounts are: Michael Pfau, "Criteria and Format to Optimize Political Debates: An Analysis of South Dakota's 'Election 80' Series," Journal of the American Forensic Association, 19 (Spring 1983), 205-214; and Strickland, "Debating in a Southern Presidential Primary" (see note 2).

[28]Los Angeles Times, 16 Jan. 1984, and 17 Jan. 1984, Part VI, p. 1.

[29]USA Today, 13 Jan. 1984, p. 2A; and Los Angeles Times, 16 Jan. 1984.

[30]Howard Rosenberg, "Demo Hopefuls Doing Better? That's Debatable," Los Angeles Times, 25 Feb 1984, p. 1.

[31]Los Angeles Times, 12 March 1984, Part I, p. 1.

[32]Hartford [Conn.] Courant, 19 March 1984, p. 1.

[33]San Diego Union, 23 Aug. 1983, p. A-6.

[34]Columbia [Mo.] Tribune, 12 Jan. 1980, p. 4.